



## Press release

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### **Guardian of the Helmeted Hornbill: Indonesian conservationist honoured for fight to ensure majestic birds are worth more alive**

Indonesian conservationist Yokyok “Yoki” Hadiprakarsa has received a prestigious Whitley Award worth £40,000 for his work to protect a Critically Endangered bird from the illegal wildlife trade.

Yoki, Founder and Principal Investigator for Rangkong Indonesia (Indonesia Hornbill Conservation Society), has been recognised for his ongoing dedication to saving the Helmeted Hornbill and other types of hornbills in Indonesia.

The Whitley Awards, often referred to as ‘Green Oscars’, are awarded annually to individuals from the Global South by UK-based conservation charity the Whitley Fund for Nature. Yoki is one of six conservationists to be recognised this year for their achievements in nature conservation.

The hornbill is a sacred species for Kalimantan’s indigenous people, the Dayaks, who believe they are the guardian of life and will guide them to God. They are also regarded as a symbol of bravery for warriors. Despite this revered status, the birds’ casque – the stunning red helmet-like protrusion on their beak – has made hornbills a profitable target for poachers who have historically sold the bird’s heads to collectors, including royalty, for centuries.

Now the most hunted hornbill in the world, intricate carved ornaments made from their casque and bills have become highly coveted on the international black market, resulting in a sharp rise in hornbill poaching in recent years. Yoki estimates that in 2013 alone, 6,000 Helmeted Hornbills were shot and decapitated in West Kalimantan. The Kapuas Hulu District, where Yoki’s work is based, is a population stronghold and hotspot for poaching, with local people driven by necessity to kill the birds for economic gain.

To combat this, Yoki works closely with communities to provide them with the skills needed to earn an income through tourism, using the colourful hornbills to attract tourists to the area. Yoki believes that birdwatching and ecotourism will allow local people to earn an income from the birds in a humane, sustainable way – ensuring hornbills are worth more alive than dead.

With his Whitley Award, Yoki will scale up this approach, identifying ecotourism hotspots in the area that are well suited for this conservation model. He’ll develop a 5-year ecotourism plan to be delivered in 3 villages, will train 100 people in activities such as bird watching, and will build capacity among locals to act as forest guardians, monitoring hornbills and their nests to prevent poaching.

Inspired at a young age by his idol, Sir David Attenborough, Yoki has dedicated the last 20 years of his life to Indonesian hornbill conservation. He said: “During my undergraduate research in Sumatra, I heard the maniacal ‘laugh’ of the Helmeted Hornbill for the first time as it flew over me, and it was love at first sight. The Whitley Award will allow us to continue to inspire communities to become Hornbill guardians.”

Edward Whitley, Founder of the Whitley Fund for Nature, said: “Yoki’s approach has encouraged people to value a species and its habitat, while allowing them to benefit economically from their area’s rich ecological heritage. Yoki’s work shows us that conservation is about people.”

Yoki is among six conservationists to receive 2020 Whitley Awards to support their work to conserve some of the planet’s most endangered species and spectacular natural habitats. While normally presented to winners by charity Patron HRH The Princess Royal at an annual Ceremony in London, the 2020 Whitley Awards Ceremony was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the winners will receive their funding now, they will be invited to attend a ceremony and related events in London later this year to celebrate their achievements, should circumstances allow.

This year’s Whitley Gold Award honours Brazilian conservationist Patrícia Medici for her outstanding dedication to protecting South America’s largest land mammal, the lowland tapir, using it as a flagship for largescale habitat preservation. Patrícia is a world expert in the science of tapir conservation and has dedicated her life to shedding light on this unusual looking, yet little-known species. Against a backdrop of political and environmental instability in Brazil, her work is more important than ever. The Whitley Gold Award enables the expansion of her work to the embattled Amazon.

Visit [www.whitleyaward.org](http://www.whitleyaward.org) to find out more.

**The 2020 Whitley Award winners are:**

- **Abdullahi Hussein Ali** – A landscape-level approach to conserve the hirola antelope, Kenya
- **Gabriela Rezende** – Connecting populations of black lion tamarins in the Atlantic Forest, Brazil
- **Jeanne Tarrant** – A country-wide strategy for South African amphibians
- **Phuntsho Thinley** – Stepping up patrols to preserve the endangered alpine musk deer, Bhutan
- **Rachel Ashebofe Ikemeh** – Advancing participatory conservation action for rare chimpanzees, Nigeria
- **YokYok (Yoki) Hadiprakarsa** – Saving the last stronghold of the Helmeted Hornbill, Indonesia

**The 2020 Whitley Gold Award winner is:**

- **Patrícia Medici** – Tapirs as conservation flagships, Brazil

**ENDS**

**Press materials available:**

- Copyright-cleared photographs of this project will be available here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/zgnk2fi5Dbe1r2yM7>
- Tailor-made films featuring the winner narrated by WFN Trustee, Sir David Attenborough, will be released later this year. Contact Chloe Baker e: [chloe@weareliquid.com](mailto:chloe@weareliquid.com) or Becky Jukes e: [becky@weareliquid.com](mailto:becky@weareliquid.com) for more information.

## Notes to Editors:

- The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) is a UK registered charity that provides funding, profile and training to grassroots conservation leaders across the Global South.
- The Whitley Awards are prestigious international prizes presented to individuals in recognition of their achievements in nature conservation. Each Award winner receives a prize worth £40,000 in project funding over one year.
- Whitley Awards are normally presented to winners by charity Patron, HRH The Princess Royal, at an annual Ceremony in London. In 2020, the Ceremony has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will be instead held in December, if the situation allows.
- The Whitley Gold Award is worth £60,000 and recognises an outstanding past recipient of a Whitley Award who has gone on to make a significant contribution to conservation. Joining the Judging Panel to assist in selection, the Gold winner also acts as a mentor to Whitley Award winners receiving their Awards in the same year.
- Since its beginnings 27 years ago, the Whitley Fund for Nature has given £17million to more than 200 conservation leaders in over 80 countries.
- WFN operates a rigorous application process involving expert panel representation from international NGOs including WWF-UK, Fauna and Flora International (FFI), the Durrell Institute for Conservation and Ecology (DICE) at the University of Kent and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). This year, WFN received 112 applications which passed through four stages of assessment, reviewed at every step by expert screeners and panellists who kindly offer their expertise voluntarily.
- The Whitley Awards are open to individuals working on wildlife conservation issues in biodiversity-rich, resource-poor countries. Further eligibility criteria are available from Liquid.
- Whitley Award winners receive professional media and communications training, network with leading conservation organisations, meet WFN donors and are interviewed by the media. The associated publicity of winning a Whitley Award puts a spotlight on their important work, boosting profile both in the UK and winner's home countries.
- The 2020 Whitley Awards week events are generously sponsored by Earlymarket LLP, Whitley Awards Partner.
- Whitley Award winners join an international network of Whitley alumni eligible to apply for Continuation Funding grants. These follow-on grants are awarded competitively to winners seeking to scale up their effective conservation results on the ground over multiple years.

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